



Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

media release

Kentucky Among Four States Chosen for Financing and Financial Aid Project

Boulder, Colorado — Kentucky is one of four new states named to participate in a multiyear project that investigates how decision makers can best align tuition, financial aid, and state appropriations policies for higher education, with the goal of improving access to college, especially for low-income students. Changing Direction: Integrating Higher Education Financial Aid and Financing Policy is a project of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and its partners, the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the Center for Policy Analysis at the American Council on Education, and the National Conference of State Legislatures. Kentucky – along with new participants California, New Mexico, and Washington – join Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Tennessee to explore and implement innovative ways of improving state-level policymaking and decision making on tuition, financial aid, and state appropriations. Kentucky plans to use the project to clarify the connections between current policies and explore policy strategies to make higher education more affordable.

Sandy Woodley, vice president for finance for the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, said the council formed an Affordability Policy Group over a year ago to work on affordability issues. "We plan to use the WICHE project, along with a detailed affordability study, to leverage resources to develop recommendations on tuition policies and financial aid, and then to link these policies to our public agenda," she said.

Funded by Lumina Foundation for Education, Changing Direction challenges legislators and other policymakers to improve financial aid and financing policy and practice to help more high school students go to college and succeed. The project, which focuses primarily on state policies and practices, examines the prevailing socioeconomic and political environments that affect each state's approach to financing and financial aid. It then identifies and promotes the kinds of major changes needed in higher education. Changing Direction provides a venue for policymakers and educators from across the country to examine the strengths and weaknesses of public policies and develop new models by looking at emerging trends, their potential impact on higher education, and the policy implications related to issues of financial aid, finance, the cost of education, and access for students – especially our neediest students.

The project has seen impressive activity so far. Arizona, one of the initial Changing Direction states, used the project to develop a vision for future higher education funding and to create

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a process for gaining broad acceptance and ownership of that vision among critical stakeholders. Connecticut found the project helpful in raising the visibility of tuition and fees policies and practices and emphasizing the need to increase their transparency. Tennessee is reviewing its state funding formula for higher education, with the goal of improving integration of student financial aid in the new formula.

WICHE & Lumina Foundation

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) and its 15 member states work collaboratively to expand educational access and excellence for all citizens of the West. By promoting innovation, cooperation, resource sharing, and sound public policy among states and institutions, WICHE strengthens higher education's contributions to the region's social, economic, and civic life. Our programs – Student Exchange, Policy and Information, the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, and Mental Health – are working to find answers to some of the most critical questions facing higher education today, investigating issues such as access to higher ed for low-income students, teacher preparation and training, articulation between K-12 and higher education, and distance education. WICHE's 15 member states include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Lumina Foundation for Education, an Indianapolis-based, private, independent foundation, strives to help people achieve their potential by expanding access and success in education beyond high school. Through grants for research, innovation, communication, and evaluation, as well as policy education and leadership development, Lumina Foundation addresses issues that affect access and educational attainment among all students, particularly underserved student groups, including adult learners. The foundation bases its mission on the belief that postsecondary education remains one of the most beneficial investments that individuals can make in themselves and that society can make in its people. For more details on the foundation, visit its website at www.luminafoundation.org.

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